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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

30 March 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Transmittal of Balance of Forces
Memorandum

1. Per my conversations with General Scowcroft last week, attached for your information are two copies of a memorandum entitled "The Balance of Military Forces in South Vietnam." In essence, this is a "net assessment" comparative look at the present capabilities of GVN and Communist military forces in South Vietnam.

2. The study's key judgments are spelled out in its first two pages, then amplified, explained and supported in the balance of its text. The evidence and analysis boils down to this: At the present time, the military forces of both sides in South Vietnam are at or near capability levels comparable to April 1972 -- just after last spring's Communist offensive was launched and when, generally speaking, Communist capabilities were at their peak.

3. The memorandum's judgment that in terms of overall military capabilities, the Communists and the South Vietnamese are, on balance, fairly evenly matched will be misinterpreted if it is not read in -- and only in -- the context within which that judgment is made. We are talking

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about the GVN's unaided capabilities, i.e., the GVN without U.S. air support. (This is not in any way offered as an estimate that U.S. air support would not be provided if the Communists mounted an all-out offensive.) Last year's Communist offensive was checked and contained by the GVN operating with U.S. air support. The Communists are now back at about their peak 1972 military capabilities and we are saying they and the GVN (alone) are fairly evenly matched in terms of measurable capabilities. This is not an argument that the GVN is weaker than it was last year. Quite the reverse. Its strength has increased considerably since last year. Again, remember that the force equation addressed in this study is different from last year's force equation because we have subtracted U.S. air power from this net assessment.

4. Because this was a self-initiated project (which I thought you might find useful), it was done entirely within the Agency. To the best of my knowledge we have no significant disagreements with our Defense Department colleagues or other members of the intelligence community on the matters covered in this study, but this is not a coordinated paper. In fact, no one outside the Agency and your office is aware of its existence.

5. In addition to your two copies, I am sending one copy to General Scowcroft and one to Mr. Kennedy. No additional distribution will be made unless or until you direct otherwise.

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Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

SC-06971/73, Copies 1 and 2

Copy No. 3 - General Scowcroft

Copy No. 4 - Mr. Kennedy

MISSING PAGE

ORIGINAL DOCUMENT MISSING PAGE(S):

Attachments 1 & 2 missing